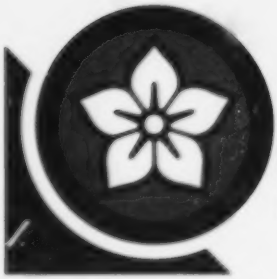

mbudsman

B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

Strategic Plan
2006 - 2010

Special Report No. 29
December 2006

to the Legislative Assembly
of British Columbia

Ombudsman
B.C.'s Independent Voice For Fairness

News Release

www.ombudsman.bc.ca

For Immediate Release
Office of the Ombudsman
PR06-005
December 5, 2006

OMBUDSMAN RELEASES STRATEGIC PLAN

VICTORIA – B.C. Ombudsman Kim Carter today released Special Report No. 29, *Office of the Ombudsman Strategic Plan, 2006 – 2010*. This report, the third strategic plan released by the Office of the Ombudsman, builds on previous plans and outlines the strategies, goals and vision of the Office in its pursuit of fair treatment for all British Columbians over the next four years.

"I look forward to leading the Office to success in achieving the goals set out in this plan and I am enthusiastic about our vision as British Columbia's Independent Voice for Fairness," said Ms. Carter. "I believe that statement perfectly sums up the work that we do."

The plan, which incorporates the input and ideas of Ombudsman staff and a variety of administrative fairness stakeholders, highlights the unique role of the Ombudsman's Office in ensuring fair treatment and public accountability for individuals accessing public services in British Columbia. The plan also prioritizes outreach and communication to increase public awareness of the Ombudsman's role.

"All citizens of this province have a right to clear, consistent and fair treatment by public agencies and our strategic plan is focussed on this objective," said Ms. Carter.

The strategic plan identifies a number of key success factors for measuring progress in achieving the Office's goals and vision, including:

- Timely resolution of complaints
- Authority and complainant satisfaction with the Ombudsman's Office
- Increased public awareness and understanding
- Useful public reporting

The Ombudsman's strategic plan is available from the Office of the Ombudsman or at its website at www.ombudsman.bc.ca.

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2006 - 2010

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data
British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman.
Office of the Ombudsman Strategic plan, 2006-2010

(Special report no. 29, December 2006, to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia)

Previously published under title: Strategic plan, 2001-2005.
ISBN 0-7726-5638-X

1. British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman. 2. Ombudsman - British Columbia. I. British Columbia. Legislative Assembly. II. Title. III. Title: Strategic plan, 2006-2010. IV. Title: Strategic plan, 2001-2005. V. Series: British Columbia. Office of the Ombudsman. Special report ... to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia ; no. 29.

JL429.5.04B74 2006 352.8'809711 C2006-960192-5

Introduction

I am pleased to present the Office of the Ombudsman's strategic plan for the years 2006 – 2010. I was appointed Ombudsman for the province of British Columbia in May of 2006 and over the last six months the strategic plans developed by my predecessors have been excellent sources of information about the work of the office and its specific goals.

This plan builds upon those plans and incorporates the input and ideas of the staff and other administrative fairness stakeholders. It highlights the unique and independent role the office plays in upholding democratic principles by ensuring fair treatment and public accountability in British Columbia. It focuses on increasing awareness of the role of the office and the assistance it provides individuals and organizations; delivering value by thorough, independent and impartial investigating and reporting; and offering a work place of choice to skilled staff who are committed to excellence. It commits to effective communication and outreach; increased accessibility for those who face barriers to accessing Ombudsman services; consultation and cooperation with other stakeholders to improve administrative fairness; and useful, public reporting.

The Office of the Ombudsman's first strategic plan was released in 1998 and the second, in 2001. The mandate of the Ombudsman in ensuring fairness in public administration for all people in British Columbia remains the same today, but British Columbia and the world has evolved over the past eight years, and to deliver on its mandate so must the vision, goals and core strategies of "British Columbia's Independent Voice for Fairness."

A recurrent theme in this plan is the need to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of the role of the Office of the Ombudsman. We cannot help people who do not know we exist or what we do. I recognize this as a challenge and it is one of my principal goals for my

term as Ombudsman. I have already begun this process, completing my first provincial outreach tour to the Interior of British Columbia in the fall of 2006.

The goals of this strategic plan are designed so that the Office of the Ombudsman can most effectively work to ensure that every person in British Columbia is, and feels they have been, treated fairly in the provision of public services. I look forward to leading the office to success in achieving those goals over the next four years.

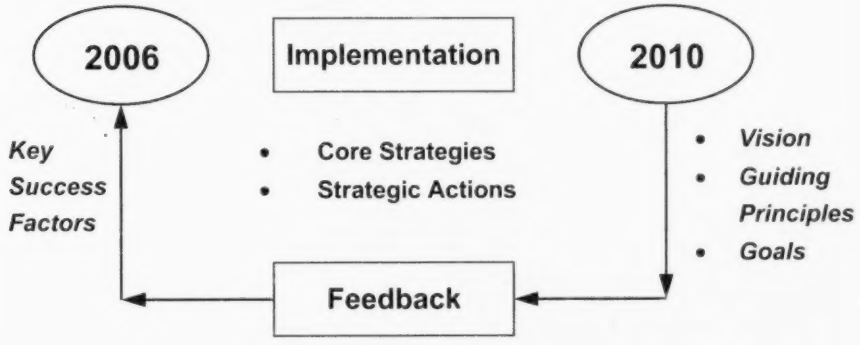
Kim S. Carter
Ombudsman
Province of British Columbia

Strategic Planning Model

Our strategic planning model is based on four main elements:

- Describing our *VISION*
- Identifying the *KEY SUCCESS FACTORS* to monitor progress
- Assessing our *CURRENT STATE*
- Implementing *CORE STRATEGIES* and Strategic Actions

This strategic plan records each of these main elements. In keeping with the fact that this is the third strategic plan for the office, there are some aspects that are maintained from the previous plans. Changes in the Core Strategies and Strategic Actions reflect the completion of previously identified actions and identification of new items of importance.



Key Success Factors

Vision

The Ombudsman is an independent Officer of the Legislature appointed pursuant to the Ombudsman Act.

British Columbia's Independent Voice for Fairness

Guiding Principles

Continuous Improvement

Supporting continuous learning and innovation

Equality

Promoting equality, inclusion and access for all persons

High Quality Service

Being accessible, responsive and accountable

Integrity

Being independent, impartial, honest and ethical

Leadership

Ensuring a long term strategic perspective, efficient use of resources and effective communication

Respect

Treating everyone with courtesy and dignity

Teamwork

Valuing the diversity, contribution and commitment of our staff

Trusting Environment

Promoting a unity of purpose, and open expression and debate of ideas and opinions

These guiding principles govern the way we do our work with the public, authorities and one another. The guiding principles are intended to be consistent with the principles of natural justice and administrative fairness, the Ombudsman Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and relevant international covenants, treaties and agreements.

Mandate

Why we exist

- to uphold the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability
- to ensure that every person in British Columbia is treated fairly in the provision of public services
- to promote and foster fairness in public administration

Who we serve

- the principle of administrative fairness
- the public
- the Legislature of British Columbia

What we do

- generally oversee the administrative actions of government authorities
- conduct thorough, impartial and independent investigation of complaints
- consider possible resolution of complaints
- consult with, provide reasons and make recommendations to authorities to improve administrative practices
- initiate investigations of apparent administrative unfairness
- provide reports to the Legislative Assembly and the people of British Columbia about administrative fairness issues and how they can be remedied
- respond to inquiries from the public
- provide information and advice about administrative fairness

Thorough and Impartial Investigations

We

- identify issues of administrative unfairness
- identify causes of recurring unfairness and advise on how it can be avoided in the future
- attempt to resolve complaints through consultation when appropriate
- employ an approach that identifies and addresses the underlying causes of complaints
- make recommendations and issue reports that are based on sound analysis of the facts, are consistent with our statutory mandate and apply the principles of natural justice and administrative fairness
- use technology to facilitate investigations, manage information, identify trends, and improve our reporting

Recognized Centre of Excellence

We

- maintain, enhance and share our expertise in
    - administrative justice
    - investigative processes
    - innovation and technology
    - training and orientation
    - case tracking system and case management
    - shared services
- identify and report on issues of current interest to authorities and the public
- educate the public and authorities about principles of administrative fairness and natural justice
- demonstrate service excellence

These goals are the long-term results we want to achieve in fulfilling the mandate of the office.

Well-Being in our Workplace

We

- provide a safe, secure and healthy workplace
- commit to excellence in hiring practices
- commit to excellence in environmental practices
- provide training, education and opportunities to enhance skills
- offer a flexible work environment
- support a culture of collegiality and staff empowerment
- acknowledge the contribution of all staff
- share a common vision

Outreach

We

- commit to increasing public awareness about the role and services of the Office of the Ombudsman
- maintain and enhance our connection to communities
- inform the public about administrative fairness
- consult with other administrative fairness stakeholders
- initiate dialogue about developing concepts in administrative fairness
- play an active role in the local, provincial, national and international ombudsman community

Key Success Factors Used to measure progress towards achieving our goals and vision	**Goals**			
Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement of:	**Thorough and Impartial Investigations**	**Recognized Centre of Excellence**	**Well-being in our Workplace**	**Outreach**
Establishment and maintenance of sound policies and procedures	✓	✓	✓	
Adherence to statutes, policies, procedures and guiding principles	✓	✓	✓	
Investigative work	✓	✓		
Workload	✓		✓	
Timeliness of work completion	✓	✓	✓	
Sound analysis of issues	✓	✓		✓
Resolution of complaints	✓	✓	✓	✓
Acceptance of recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public reporting	✓	✓		✓
Authority and complainant satisfaction with the Ombudsman's Office	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improvement in authority fairness	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to our office		✓		✓
Continuous improvement of knowledge and skills	✓	✓	✓	
Workplace satisfaction		✓	✓	
Public awareness and understanding		✓		✓
General application of principles and recommendations in public administration in British Columbia	✓	✓	✓	✓

We identify our strengths as

- making a positive contribution to life in British Columbia
- upholding the democratic principles of openness, transparency and accountability
- respect for the Office of the Ombudsman by the public
- respect for the Office of the Ombudsman by complainants and authorities
- the diversity, talents, experience and commitment of our staff
- collaboration with other offices for sharing services, ideas, procedures and systems
- the team structure of our office organization
- strong committed leadership with a long term perspective
- the *Ombudsman Act*
- our computer support and case tracker systems
- capacity to support telecommuting and mobile intake
- safe, functional, healthy, and environmentally responsible office facilities
- a work environment that supports staff well-being
- the use of internal and external communication tools
- orientation of new staff
- a commitment to continuous improvement
- a commitment to ensuring access to our office
- internal quality assurance measures

We identify the following areas for improvement

- increasing authorities' and the public's understanding of the role of the Ombudsman
- increasing the impact of our systemic investigations and reports
- overcoming barriers to access for complainants
- internal communications
- training, development and career opportunities for all staff
- opportunities for participation in decision-making
- including qualitative factors in performance measures

We identify our opportunities as

- enhancing our profile to build awareness and understanding of the Ombudsman's role
- education of public and authorities that improves understanding of administrative fairness
- connecting with diverse cultural and geographic communities
- partnership with other stakeholders in administrative fairness
- assisting development of internal complaint remedies by authorities that improve administrative fairness
- addressing issues arising from changing service delivery processes
- review and updating of the *Ombudsman Act*
- innovative use of technology that makes communication and investigation easier
- national and international participation in growth of ombudsmanship that improves general knowledge of the role of the Ombudsman
- establishing a benchmark with our technology systems

We identify our challenges as

- insufficient awareness and understanding by the public and authorities of the Ombudsman's role
- ability to provide equitable access and high quality service in a geographically and culturally diverse province
- increasing complexity of complaints
- resource restrictions
- limited office space

Some of the actions, those that were not completed and are still considered important, are carried forward from the previous strategic plan and other actions have been added to reflect our current situation.

Increased Awareness

To broaden the public profile and improve understanding of the role of the Ombudsman we will

- develop and implement a communications plan
- explore service opportunities in other regions of the province
- increase public reporting
- liaise with multicultural and advocacy organizations
- meet with authorities to improve understanding of role of Ombudsman and administrative fairness
- seek opportunities for interaction with organizations which represent public agencies
- meet with MLAs and constituency assistants
- develop relationships with the academic community
- increase site visits to provincial institutions
- participate in parliamentary ombudsman organizations and other ombudsman organizations
- initiate Ombudsman fairness awards
- increase frequency of provincial tours

Quality Service

To implement the *Ombudsman Act* to the highest standards we will

- develop new tools to improve general oversight of the administrative actions of government authorities
- produce useful systemic reports
- improve accessibility for complainants
- solicit stakeholder, complainant, authority and staff feedback
- continue high quality investigations and complaint resolutions
- review and initiate update of *Ombudsman Act*
- continue to update policies and procedures
- provide access to translator/interpretation services
- share knowledge
- enhance technology
- share investigative outcomes among staff
- recognize quality work by our office and others
- refine performance measures including qualitative factors
- support opportunities for training, learning and improvement

Workplace of Choice

To attract, retain and support skilled staff who are committed to excellence we will

- offer opportunities to enhance justice and fair treatment
- provide intellectual challenge
- provide flexible work options for staff
- promote professionalism
- enhance open communication and honest, constructive feedback at all levels
- foster a shared vision among staff
- practice environmental stewardship
- proactive review and assessment of workplace health and safety
- promote well-being initiatives
- provide on-site technological support
- provide opportunities for staff development
- recognize quality work and contributions to staff morale
- provide opportunities for staff participation in office initiatives
- value collegiality

Appendix A

Schedule of Authorities

1. Ministries of the government.

2. A person, corporation, commission, board, bureau or authority who is or the majority of the members of which are, or the majority of the members of the board of management or board of directors of which are,

   (a) appointed by an Act, minister, the Lieutenant Governor in Council,

   (b) in the discharge of their duties, public officers or servants of the government, or

   (c) responsible to the government.

3. A corporation the ownership of which or a majority of the shares of which is vested in the government.

4. Municipalities.

5. Regional districts.

6. The Islands Trust established under the *Islands Trust Act.*

7. Improvement districts as defined in the *Local Government Act.*

8. The Capital Improvement District under the *Capital Commission Act.*

9. Boards, committees, commissions or similar bodies established under the *Community Charter,* the *Local Government Act* or the *Vancouver Charter.*

10. The Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Whistler Resort Association.

11. A local trust committee, the Trust Council, the Trust Fund Board and the executive committee and persons to whom their powers are delegated under the *Islands Trust Act.*

12. Library boards as defined in the *Library Act.*

13. The Cultus Lake Park Board.

14. A greater board as defined in the *Community Charter.*

15. Development districts, water users' communities, comptroller and regional water manager under the *Water Act.*

16. The commissioners of a district defined in section 58 of the *Drainage, Ditch and Dike Act* and an engineer, commissioner, inspector of dikes or land settlement board acting under that Act.

17. The British Columbia Diking Authority and a diking authority under the *Dike Maintenance Act.*

18. The Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Board.

19. Regional transit commissions established under the *British Columbia Transit Act.*

20. A corporation

    (a) more than 50% of the issued voting shares of which are owned by one or more of the authorities listed in section 4 to 19 or this section, or

    (b) that is controlled by one or more of the authorities listed in section 4 to 19 and, for the purposes of ascertaining control, a corporation is controlled by one or more of these authorities if a majority of the members of the corporation or of its board of directors or board of management consists of either or both of the following:

        (i) persons appointed as members by the authorities;

        (ii) officers or employees of an authority acting as such.

21. Schools and boards as defined in the *School Act.*

21.1. Francophone education authorities as defined in the *School Act* and francophone schools operated by francophone education authorities.

22. Universities as defined in the *University Act.*

23. The University of Northern British Columbia.

24. Royal Roads University.

25. Institutions as defined in the *College and Institute Act.*

26. Hospitals and boards of management of hospitals as defined in the *Hospital Act*.

27. Governing bodies of professional and occupational associations that are established or continued by an Act.

28. Regional Health Boards established under the *Health Authorities Act*.

29. Regional Hospital Districts under the *Hospital District Act*.

30. [Repealed 2002-35-11.]

31. The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority established under the *Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act*.

32. The Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority established under the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority Act*.

Municipal Pension Board of Trustees

Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees

Public Service Pension Board of Trustees

College Pension Board of Trustees

British Columbia Safety Authority established under the *Safety Authority Act*

Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia

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